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1852

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NARRATIVE OF CONVERSATIONS

HELD WITH

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS

AND

WM. CLARKE,

Who were executed January 27th, 1832,

FOR THE PART THEY TOOK IN

THE BRISTOL RIOTS:

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A LETTER BY W. CLARKE,

FINISHED ON THE DAY OF HIS EXECUTION,

On the Evils of Sabbath-Breaking and Drunkenness.

BY A LAYMAN.

BRISTOL:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. CHILCOTT, WINE STREET
AND SOLD BY MESSRS RIVINGTON, HATCHARD AND SON,
AND NISBETT, LONDON.

1832.

27.

TO ALL THOSE

WHO WITNESSED THE ATROCITIES AND ABOMINATIONS

OF

THE BRISTOL RIOTS,

AND ESPECIALLY

TO THE LABOURING AND MANUFACTURING CLASSES

OF

THIS CITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE INSCRIBED

BY

THEIR SINCERE FRIEND AND WELL-WISHER,

J. S. H.

The Rev. W. Day, chaplain of the Bristol Gaol, and his son the Rev. S. E. Day, allow the writer to add, that they fully confirm the facts of the narrative.

BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA

A NARRATIVE,

&c.

On THURSDAY, January 26, 1832, the day before the awful sentence of the law was executed on *Christopher Davis, William Clarke, Thomas Gregory,* and *Joseph Kayes,* for the part they acted in the Bristol riots, the writer of the following pages visited them in company with the Rev. William Day, the chaplain of the gaol. He had sent each of them a short time ago, through the chaplain, a tract which appeared to him adapted to impress their minds suitably to their solemn situation, and they had in consequence themselves expressed a desire to see him.

It will readily be conceived that I felt much on seeing around me, as I entered within the prison walls, the traces of ruin and devastation caused by the late fire; connecting them, as my thoughts instantly did, with the crimes and approaching punishment of the poor men whom I was about to visit.

It so happened that we arrived at an affecting moment to the prisoners. They had not long before been informed that Vines, one of the five

left for capital punishment, was reprieved, but that the sentence was positively to be executed on the other four.

We were first introduced into the cell of Christopher Davis, and found him sitting on his bed, looking very pale and dejected, but quite calm. I took him by the hand, and told him that in his present situation I could only feel towards him the kindest and the best wishes of a christian; and that I had come to see him, from hearing that he had expressed a wish that I would. He thanked me in a feeling manner; said he took my calling very kind, and then told me he had read the tract* alluded to with much interest, and that he had also read it out to his fellow-prisoners. He then broke out into very affecting expressions in reference to his trying situation, and expressed an earnest hope that God would have mercy on his soul for the sake of Jesus Christ. Mr. Day then addressed him in a very kind and feeling manner, telling him, that if he approached the throne of grace as a sincere penitent, deeply sensible of the corruption of his nature, and hating the remembrance of all his actual sins and transgressions, he might humbly hope that mercy would be extended to him, for the sake of that blessed Saviour who shed his precious blood upon the cross for our redemption. He also told him, that the more deeply he was humbled before God, and the more sincerely he confessed and bewailed his sins,

* The tract in question is intitled "Narrative of Interesting Particulars respecting H. M'Donald, and others, who were Executed at Edinburgh, April 22, 1812, for Riot, Robbery, &c." printed by Chilcott, Bristol, 1832.

the surer would his title become to hope and comfort through Christ.

After some further conversation of a similar tendency, Davis addressing me, expressed himself in substance as follows:—Oh! sir, I have been a great sinner. I do not wish to speak any thing but the truth. There was a time when I used to hear that good gentleman there, pointing to Mr. Day, with delight, and when I heard Mr. Thorpe also, and other ministers. (He lately told Mr. Day, that he had then been accustomed to read the bible with comfort and profit) but, continued he, I became connected with evil companions, and addicted to drinking, and then I gradually left off attending the public worship of God, and all this has caused my ruin. For the last eight or nine years I have been leading an irreligious life, and have spent my Sundays in driving about from place to place, and have been flighty and raving. In answer to something that was said to him, he then owned, with expressions of self-reproach, that he had been a great scoffer at religion, that he had been in the habit of using very profane and wicked language, and that he had often abused and vilified the clergy by opprobrious epithets; but he disclaimed ever having been in his heart an infidel. He recently said to Mr. Day, it seems to me sir, when I reflect on my having used such bad language, that I must have been under the influence of an evil spirit. And here I cannot but remark that Davis's feelings of self-reproach at having so unjustly vilified the clergy, must have been greatly embittered by the reflection, that the persons, who in these dark and dreary hours of his soul's agony and distress, felt for him with

all the warmth of christian charity, who were affectionately earnest for his eternal welfare, and who devoted much of their time from day to day to his comfort and instruction, were *two clergymen*. I had a full opportunity of witnessing the humane sympathy—the impressive zeal and fidelity with which the chaplain discharged his duties; and the grateful and affectionate language and demeanor of the prisoners towards him, proved how sensibly they felt it. In these labours of christian love, he was zealously aided by his son, who daily devoted some hours to the instruction of the five prisoners after their condemnation.

To return from this digression—Davis now turned to us both, and with great earnestness, of look and manner, said, I hope if either of you gentlemen ever hear a story of my having been so wicked as to burn the bible, you will declare what I now say, that there is no truth in it. He had previously told the Rev. S. Day the same, and added, that if he had ever done so impious a deed, he should have despaired of his salvation. He mentioned this report with looks and expressions which convinced me that he was truly shocked at it, and was most anxious to contradict it. His wife, he said, had done all in her power to reclaim him, and to induce him to attend to his religious duties, but all in vain.

Some allusion being made to the late riots, he gave an indistinct account of the part he had acted on the Saturday. He then said, that on Sunday he proceeded to the scene of the riots about noon, when the town was all in a ferment, and that he had gone from one public house to another, drinking spirits at each, till he became

highly excited. Then it was that the bad principles which had been fermenting in his mind for years burst forth into full play, and urged him on to act the part of inciting and encouraging the wretches who spread burning and devastation all around them. Had he remained sober, these principles would have been lurking within, but the fear of consequences would probably have kept him quiet; but heated as he now was with liquor, he lost all self-control, and was seen on various occasions instigating the mob in their most savage excesses. When we alluded to this part of his conduct, he seemed desirous to persuade himself that his guilt was not so great as that of others because he had not with his own hands taken any part in the burnings; but we told him in reply, that a little reflection must convince him that the conduct he had pursued had made him a partaker in the guilt of all the dreadful excesses, and all the sad consequences of that fatal day. We reminded him that his respectable appearance and situation in life gave weight to his influence either for good or evil, and that he was far more responsible in this sense than any of the furious mob. I can truly say we made these remarks to him in a spirit of kindness and forbearance, and with a sincere desire to give him as little pain as possible; but it appeared so indispensible to his obtaining any real peace of mind that he should view his conduct in a right light, that we were anxious to do all in our power to rid him of any self-deception. Mr. Day had, in former conversations, found it necessary to reason with him in the same way, and to tell him that though his hands were not actually stained with murder, he had done much to promote

those atrocities, which had caused the death of so many of his fellow-creatures. He told him to think of those miserable wretches who, amidst the wildest excesses of drunkenness, and the cries of blasphemy, had perished in the flames which their own hands had kindled, and who had been hurried, without a moment's space for reflection or repentance, from Time into Eternity—from the scene of their crimes and profligacy into the presence of a heart-searching and avenging God. He was desired also to remember how many of the rioters had been killed and wounded by the charges of the cavalry; and he also was reminded that poor Colonel Brereton's dreadful act of suicide had grown out of the same train of causes, and that in this view of the case he was closely connected with the guilt of all the blood that had been shed, and all the crimes which had been committed.

Should what I am now writing meet the eye of any of those men who were active in the riots, though they have escaped the eye of justice, let *them* also take a full share to themselves of the guilt of all these horrors,—let the thought of it fill them with shame and sorrow whenever it crosses their minds,—let them sincerely repent of it before God ere it be too late,—and let it in particular be a warning to them never again to have any thing to do with a riotous mob.

The same remarks apply with equal force to all who, like Davis, urged on or encouraged the rioters. Let such persons fancy themselves for a moment in the place of this man after sentence was passed upon him, and then reflect with what feelings they would have looked back in the hour of approaching death upon such conduct. Nor

let them fail to thank that gracious Providence which has yet spared them in mercy, and given them space for repentance, and for doing the utmost they can to repair to society, by better conduct, the mischief of their past wicked example.

It so happened that the Rev. S. Day saw Davis about half-past two on the Sunday, under circumstances which prove how bent he was on mischief. Mr. Day had been advised by one of his friends not to think of performing afternoon service at the Bristol Gaol, as it was reported that the mob were about to go there. He however felt that he ought not to shrink from his duty, and was returning thence about the hour above-named, when on passing through Back Street, behind Queen Square, he observed a man dressed very respectably, pulling down from a wall with the end of an umbrella one of the placards giving notice that Sir C. Wetherell had left Bristol, and uttering, while doing so, imprecations and language far too horrid to be repeated—this man was Davis. Mr. Day had never seen him before, and the next time he saw him was during his trial, when the moment he set eyes on him, he beheld in him the identical person whom he had thus watched in Back Street. Davis acknowledged the fact when Mr. Day reminded him of it.

We now turned his attention away from any further discussion of this subject, and intreated him, as his remaining hours on earth were so few, to shut out this world from his thoughts, and only to be careful and anxious about the concerns of his immortal soul. We besought him to deal sincerely with himself in confessing before God the sins of his past life, and instead of seeking to

palliate his guilt, to pray for grace, to see it in all its extent, and to deplore it with heart-felt penitence.

Upon this the poor man, after a minute's pause, throwing back his head, lifted up his clasped hands, and broke out into an earnest prayer for mercy. He acknowledged in strong and pointed terms the sins and wickedness of his past life; he accused himself before God in an affecting and impressive manner, and besought him in sentences, broken by the apparent agony of his feelings, that when body and soul should be separated on the morrow, he might find mercy for the sake of that spotless Lamb who was slain to take away the sins of the world.

Mr. Day then offered up a prayer in terms very suitable to his trying condition, and concluded by commending his soul to the divine mercy, in and through Christ Jesus our Lord. On rising from our knees we bid him an impressive farewell. Mr. Day, from the tenor of his daily visits to this poor man, entertains much hope that he was sincere in his professions of penitence. Davis was a man of very respectable appearance, and had for many years carried on an extensive and profitable business in Bristol as a carrier. He is said to have been regular and industrious in the conduct of his business; and when sober, a man of humane and benevolent dispositions.

The Rev. Mr. Samuel Day tells me, that the moment Davis reached the prison after his trial, he fell down on his knees in the porter's lodge, and engaged in earnest prayer. He has also put into my hands some brief notes of what passed on different interviews with him.

They closely agree with the above particulars. The following is the substance of this paper:—"On my first visit to Davis in his cell after his trial, I found him in great agony of mind; his heart apparently much softened; he readily acknowledged his just exposure to the wrath and indignation of God on account of his sins and iniquities, and implored earnestly the divine mercy through Christ. He continued to evince a truly humbled spirit, and to confess and lament his transgressions, especially his use of wicked and profane language. He had found pleasure, he said, in former days in the duties of religion, particularly in attending the house of God; but that prosperity had proved a great snare to him; for that after he got into easy worldly circumstances, he had gradually neglected public worship, had taken to drinking, and to bad companions, and so on, till it had pleased God suddenly to arrest him in his course. He mourned over the unrestrained licence he had given to his tongue in reviling and abusing persons in authority, and lamented that he had ever meddled with politics; about which, he said, both he and the persons with whom he was used to associate, were in reality ignorant. They fancied, he said, that it added to their consequence, to deliver strong opinions at public houses on such subjects, but that he now saw his folly.

The chaplain one day said to him, Davis, were you happy in the midst of your irreligious habits? His reply was, No Sir, never.—Often and often did conscience reprove me in a most severe manner. He even added, that he had felt more real satisfaction and comfort in humbling himself before God since he came into prison, than he had ever

experienced, except in the days of his youth, when he had delighted to attend to his religious duties. He also said, he felt very thankful that he had not been suddenly cut off in the midst of his sins; and he expressed much anxiety that others might be induced to take warning by his unhappy fate, and renounce the sins which had caused his ruin.

Our next visit was to Wm. Clarke, who appeared more firm and composed than Davis. He seemed truly glad to see the kind chaplain, and his whole deportment was respectful and pleasing. Our conversation commenced much in the same way as it had with Davis. He appeared gratified by the kind solicitude for his best welfare expressed and manifested towards him. The New Testament was open beside him. After a little suitable conversation, he said to me with particular frankness and earnestness of manner, that the habit of drinking had been his ruin, united to an utter disregard of the Lord's day. On my observing that I supposed he had *sometimes* attended Divine service, he replied that he could hardly remember the time when he had gone to a place of worship; and he added, that he looked back upon his conduct with feelings quite different from any he had ever known before. He then said, that he had long been in the habit of spending the hours that he ought to have passed with his wife at home at public houses, where he was sure of a hearty welcome, "*because he was always foremost at any fun.*" Mr. Day made in reply some just remarks on the evils of drunkenness, and said it was the reigning sin of this country, and the ruin of thousands. Clarke then said, that it was by getting drunk on the

Sunday of the riots that he had been brought into his present misery.

His mother had warned him not to go into Bristol, doubtless dreading the consequences to a man of his habits; but seeing one of his friends on his way thither, he joined him. He said, that on getting there, he went from one public house to another, and had taken beer, and spirits, and wine, till he had become quite drunk, and that his riotous conduct was entirely owing to intoxication. This statement I have no doubt is correct; but it forms no excuse for his conduct. If drunkenness could be admitted as an apology for crime, society could not hold together for a single day; for it is the parent of every sin and outrage that can disgrace human nature. Clarke's case also shews how dangerous it is to get into the midst of a riotous mob. He appears to have left his house without any intention of taking a part in their excesses, but when among them, he caught their spirit; the liquor he had taken made him forgetful of consequences; the bad passions of his nature were suddenly called into action, and he quickly became foremost in some of the worst outrages that were committed.

Mr. Day informs me that he found him on their first interviews, extremely ignorant, as was to be expected; but that he was anxious to be instructed in Christian knowledge. The book which impressed him beyond every other was, "Baxter's Call to the Unconverted." He said, after reading it, that he felt himself to be so great a sinner, that he almost despaired of obtaining mercy. This was a hopeful conviction, and every endeavour was used by the chaplain to deepen it in his mind, that he

might thus be prepared to listen with well-grounded hope to the consolations of the gospel. Various observations were made by us suitable to his case, and he was addressed by the chaplain in a very impressive manner. There was a frankness and an apparent sincerity in all he said that much interested me, and I could not but make this reflection to myself on his case;—Here is a man whose qualities of mind and heart are such as under the culture of religion might have rendered him a most useful, benevolent, and respectable character; but this one beastly and detestable vice—*drunkenness*, first blasted all his good qualities, and at last hurried him into crimes which have brought him to the gallows. As many have been his companions in sin, so may they be induced to profit by his dying convictions and ignominious end. It was his sincere, his earnest wish to leave behind him a warning for their good; he told the chaplain and myself that he should, and this interesting document now lies in his own hand writing before me. He committed it to the Rev. S. Day, with a particular wish that it might be made useful. I shall give it exactly in his own simple language, only correcting the spelling.

"January 26, 1832.

"*My dear Friends,*

"I hope you will take this as a friendly warning. It is my particular wish to inform you of the evil of Sabbath breaking. It is the cause of bringing me to this disgraceful end. I hope you will take warning by us, my dear friends. Look at us who did seek our death October 30th, 1831. Look at this particular point first, and

then you will see, my dear friends, that if I had been to my church I should not have got into this disgrace that I am in. My dear friends, let me beg of you to attend your church. It is the particular wish of a poor dying sinner. Do let me beg of all Sabbath breakers to attend your church, as you will find every good advice there. If I had gone to my church, I should not have gone into town that Sunday afternoon. Let me beg of you to take warning by me, as Sabbath-breaking and drinking is two of the greatest evils that ever a man can be guilty of. My dear friends, I was a great drunkard and a Sabbath-breaker; and, I must own, a very great sinner; and I hope you will take warning. Let me beg of you to leave off bad company: let me beg of you to think of my words, as it is my dying wish. My dear friends, think of my dying words; leave off all evil ways, attend your church, and hearken to your friends' good advice. If I had hearkened to my dear friends, I should not have been in this distressed trouble. Do let me beg of you to take this as a warning to you all.

"My dear Mr. Day, and my dear Mr. Glover, it is my particular wish for you to put in a prayer for my dear wife and my dear mother, and make it public how sorry I am for neglecting their good advice.

"My dear friends, let me beg of you all to take my advice. It is my last advice, and I hope you will always keep it in mind. Always attend a place of worship; Sabbath-breaking and drinking have been my ruin. Let me beg of you to turn your wicked hearts; it is my dying wish.

"Jan. 27, 1832. "WILLIAM CLARKE.

"Beg all my friends to be good to my dear wife."

This letter was written at intervals: it was begun on the afternoon before his execution, and finished on the morning of the day on which he suffered.—He sat up on his bed writing it on a book, and it cost him much labour.

We next paid a visit to Thomas Gregory, whom the chaplain addressed in a kind and impressive manner. He appeared to be a taciturn and reserved character.*

On going to the cell of Joseph Kayes, we found two respectable ministers of the Wesleyan connection with him, and therefore withdrew.

We then saw Vines, the reprieved man. He expressed very great thankfulness at being thus delivered from the jaws of death, and added that he was bent on leading a new life, and renouncing for ever, those wicked habits which had been his ruin. As he spoke with a somewhat unbecoming confidence, Mr. Day very justly reminded him of the weakness of our corrupt nature, in the hour of temptation, unless fortified and strengthened by the grace of God, which he exhorted him to seek by diligent and persevering prayer. He also added by way of further caution, a remarkable anecdote, which had been related to him by a clergyman,

* The Rev. Mr. Roberts, who, at Gregory's request, visited him in prison, and paid him unremitting attention, has made public some interesting particulars of his case. He earnestly requested him to warn his acquaintance to beware of sabbath-breaking and drunkenness, as being the evils which had brought him to so ignominious an end. On reaching the foot of the gallows the immense crowd assembled caught his eye, and he said, I hope they will take warning by our fate. He also looked at the new church opposite, and said to Davis, if we had been there on the Sunday we should not have been here—what an evil sabbath-breaking is!

the Rev. Mr. Forster; it was as follows:—Mr. F. once attended a man committed to prison for a crime affecting his life. His guilt was undoubted, and he gave himself up for lost—he fully expected to go to the gallows—and he spent much of the time before his trial in religious duties, in which he was constantly assisted by Mr. Forster, who said of him, that if ever he had beheld a penitent criminal, he was the man. The day of trial came, and in consequence of some flaw in the evidence, he was unexpectedly acquitted. *In a month he was again in prison, charged with another flagrant crime.* This anecdote, (and there are many more such) though they should by no means discourage us from doing every thing that christian charity can do, to point out to criminals the only way of salvation, by repentance and faith in Christ, will make every reflecting man rejoice with trembling, even when appearances are most promising. God alone knows the heart, and can clearly discern between real sorrow for, and hatred of sin; and those deceitful appearances of conversion which are solely caused by the terrors of approaching death and judgment. Professions of repentance from the lips of a criminal at the gallows, or from those of any irreligious man in his last moments, are gladly caught at by christian charity with a humble hope that they may be sincere: the awful decision on them rests with that great Being who searches the reins and the heart. There is one instance recorded in scripture of real repentance in the hour of death, that none may *despair*,—there is only one, that none may *presume*.

We quitted the prison under impressions at once solemn and mournful. What afterwards oc-

curred shall be briefly narrated as communicated to me verbally by the chaplain and his son. The latter was with the prisoners till a late hour on the night of our visit, and early on the morning of the ensuing day, which was to be so awfully decisive of their eternal fate; his father and himself were with them soon after seven. They first spent some time with each of the prisoners alone in their cells. —Davis expressed much comfort at being roused, as he said his dreams had been frightful—Clarke, who had begun the evening before to write the letter which we have given, finished it while sitting up in bed in the morning, and read it with great earnestness to the Rev. S. Day. He said to the chaplain when he first saw him, my dear sir, I am *very, very* glad to see you. About half-past nine the prisoners breakfasted, and then the chaplain assembled them in the day room—the Rev. Mr. Roberts, whom Gregory had requested to see, and who had paid him much kind attention, and the Rev. Messrs. Taylor and Gaisford, of the Wesleyan connection, to whom Kayes had sent, and who had been anxiously employed in endeavouring to impress his mind, were also present. Mr. Day read parts of the 15th chap. 1 Cor. and after commenting upon it, prayed. He then inquired if either of the ministers present wished to say any thing to the prisoners, when Mr. Gaisford very feelingly addressed them upon the necessity of being truly sincere with themselves, and earnest in prayer for their everlasting safety, and was followed in a similar manner by his other brethren. Twelve o'clock was now arrived, and the time came for pinioning them. The Rev. Mr. Day took this opportunity of going below and delivering a suitable address to

the other prisoners. While their hands were binding, Davis wept a little, but in a quiet manner, and was constantly uttering ejaculatory prayers; such as, "Lord Jesus have mercy on me"—"Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Soon after, the sheriffs and the under-sheriff arrived, and waited for the prisoners in the long passage adjoining the room where they were. By this time Mr. Day had returned. Then commenced the mournful procession; the sheriffs were followed by the chaplain, who repeated, as they walked down the passage and yards, and round the ruined walls of the prison, the introductory sentences of the burial service of the church, —"I am the resurrection and the life," &c. The prisoners followed, accompanied by the Rev. S. Day, and the ministers before-mentioned. They proceeded in this solemn manner to the room beneath the scaffold, where the ropes were adjusted;—here the chaplain again addressed them and prayed. His feelings would not allow him to follow them up the stairs to the top of the gateway, where the fatal beam was erected, but his son supplied his place. Before they mounted the stairs, each of the prisoners came to the chaplain, and taking his hand kissed it in the most affectionate and earnest manner, blessing him for his christian kindness. Davis had in his hands a small bible, which he presented to him with much feeling, adding, "sir, take this, it has been said I despised this book, I can truly declare that reading it has been my greatest comfort in prison." They were all anxious to take a last farewell of the reverend gentlemen in attendance, and kissed the hands of each with great warmth of affection. They also took a grateful leave of Mr. Humphries, the humane go-

vernor of the gaol. They now ascended to the top of the gateway, where the scaffold was erected, the lower part of which was hung with black cloth; here all again knelt down, and the Rev. S. Day offered up a short prayer. After the prisoners had taken a last farewell of each other, the caps were drawn over their faces, the platform fell, and they were launched into eternity.

An immense multitude, collected in every direction whence the gallows could be discerned, beheld this awful and affecting sight in solemn silence, interrupted here and there by expressions of commiseration, or by such words as—"Now they are praying."

The arrangements which had been made under the directions of the magistracy and the General in command of the district to preserve the public peace, were admirable. About 700 special constables were on duty under Mr. Dowling, one of the superintendants of the London Police; and a large military force was in attendance, ready, if needful to act at a moment's warning.

The prisoners, throughout their confinement, received the kindest and most considerate attentions from the visiting Magistrates.

Having now come to the end of my affecting narrative, I will venture on a few reflections which seem to grow naturally out of it. The object of these pages is simply christian edification. I shall, therefore, cautiously avoid touching on any of those questions connected with the riots which have been discussed with so much heat in this city; but I must be allowed to throw out one or two observations suitable for all times and all parties. Let every man who really wishes well to his country,

beware how he uses language, or engages in combinations which encourage the most distant idea of redressing any alleged grievances by violent or illegal proceedings. The love of popularity and a vain wish for distinction, often lead men to utter sentiments on public occasions, which they afterwards see reason to reflect upon with shame and regret. Events such as we have witnessed in Bristol, ought to abate the fury of political contention, to unite all right-minded men in a fixed resolution to exert their utmost energies to uphold lawful authority, and to pursue political objects by such means only as reason and conscience can justly approve.

To the labouring and manufacturing classes I would say, What do the people gain when they violently tread down the fences of law and property? Punishment follows in the train of crime. "Human society could not hold together, if such conduct was not put down by the strong arm of the law. All that makes life valuable to man, the free enjoyment of the fruits of his honest industry and protection from personal violence, must be altogether given up, if crimes like these could be committed with impunity. The innocent and weak would become a prey to the wicked and the strong, and brutal force would overpower law and order."*

While destroying the property of your richer neighbours, you dry up the very springs that give life to your own industry. Do you imagine that the respectable persons whose property has been destroyed in Queen Square are the only losers by the burnings? Think of the number of persons now

* Vide Charge of Chief Justice Tindal.

out of employ in Bristol, and be assured that the riots have much to do with it. Outrages like these destroy public confidence. The foreign merchant is afraid of sending his goods to a port where they may very possibly be burnt or pillaged; the resident merchant and manufacturer contract their business, till the return of more tranquil times; the man who has money is very cautious how he employs it in a place where property is insecure. All this makes trade dull, and work scarce; and the lapse of time and the peaceable conduct of the populace, can alone restore confidence; and till confidence revives, Bristol cannot flourish. The time is at hand, too, when the city must pay for all the houses burnt, and property destroyed by the rioters. Now the money which each householder, rated for the damages, may have to pay towards them, will leave him so much less to spend at the shop of his neighbour, or in giving employment to the industrious. So true it is, that in doing injury to any one class of society, we injure in the end every other.

Think, too, how many charitable societies have held no anniversary meetings this year, on account of the agitated and riotous state of Bristol; and what a number of poor people have thus been deprived of a great deal of comfort and help.

It is a great mistake for the labouring classes to suppose that their richer fellow-subjects are indifferent to the trials and difficulties to which they are exposed, or that they are not seriously desirous to support every just and rational means of bettering their condition. There has long been an increasing and anxious desire to promote their comfort and independence, and to secure a fair return for their

industry. But any attempts to bring about these important objects by a violent invasion of property will be followed by increased distress and suffering, and by the trial and punishment of the guilty.

The remedy for distress is not to be brought about by doing violence to the property of other men, but by seeking through legal and peaceable means a redress for any real grievances; by the practice of industry, economy, and sobriety; and by depending on the blessing of God upon our honest endeavours to fulfil the duties of a good christian and a loyal subject.

These remarks well deserve your serious attention, but the preceding narrative suggests still more important reflections. You frequently meet with men who scoff at religion, and revile its ministers. Regard such men as your worst enemies. Reflect seriously on the case of Davis. His happy days, (he said so himself again and again) were the days, when he kept holy the Sabbath, when he read the Bible with pleasure and improvement, and endeavoured to do his duty as a christian. His unhappy days, the days he looked back to with remorse and anguish, were the days in which he left off attending the house of God, took to drinking and bad company, and opened his mouth in blasphemy, cursing, and impiety.

Think of the regret with which he looked back to his violence in politics, and of the shame and sorrow he felt for his frantic abuse of persons in authority; reflect on his candid avowal of his own ignorance and of that of the persons who united with him in this disgraceful line of conduct; and let it be a warning to you against abusing the most exalted characters, on no better authority than the

calumnies of a violent newspaper, or the falsehoods of the "Black List."

There is something very affecting in the thought that a man may begin life well, and yet end his days on the gallows. Be assured it was not God who deserted Davis, but he that deserted God. He well knew this himself, and bitter was his anguish in looking back upon the past. Had he continued to read his Bible with a sincere desire to profit by it; had he continued to attend the public worship of God, in a devout temper; had he earnestly implored the help of the Holy Spirit to apply to his conscience, and to write upon his heart the great truths thus read and heard, how different would his life have been; how blessed his hope in death. The good seed of God's word, instead of being choked by thorns (vid. Matt. xiii. 22.) would then have taken deep root downward, and brought forth much fruit upward to the glory of God, to the good and happiness of all around him, and to his own eternal profit. "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Let those who are young, and are full, as Davis once was, of good resolutions and intentions, reflect much upon this striking example of the deceitfulness and treachery of the human heart. Let them remember and act upon the divine warning, "Without me ye can do nothing," (John xv. 5.) and the divine precept, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." (Matt. xxvi. 41.)

The case of Clarke is different, but it is full of instruction. It shews that a man may have abundance of what are called natural good qualities, and yet be the "slave of sin," and in enmity with

God. He grew up to manhood and to middle age in an utter neglect of every religious duty. He sought for happiness in tap rooms and public houses. Profane mirth, and noisy revelry were his delight. His love of fun, as he called it, and his love of drink, endeared him to a set of men of similar habits. They encouraged and confirmed each other in an open contempt of the commandments of God and of the decencies of life. To use his own words, "he was a great drunkard." Yet the good Spirit of God strove even with him, for he told Mr. Day, that often and often, after thus sinking himself below the level of the brutes, his conscience smote him with remorse, and that he had, on such occasions, frequently gone upon his knees and tried to pray. But a wicked habit, long indulged, is one of the worst of tyrants; and they who have long served the Devil, are led captive by him at his will, when temptation returns. When we look at a human being, we are apt to think of him as if he belonged only to this perishing world. Even were it so, it would be truly mournful that a creature endowed with reason should degrade himself by drunkenness. But when we view man in his highest, that is, in his immortal character,—when we remember that, though his present life is but for a moment, he carries within him a deathless spirit,—that he is here on his trial for Heaven or for Hell;—above all, when we reflect that Christ died for his redemption,—how sad it is to behold a creature so honoured by the possession of the noblest faculties, and so dignified as the object of such divine love, —how sad is it to behold him wallowing in brutal vice, and gross sensuality. But this is not all.

Drunkenness is the fruitful parent of almost every crime. It is the chief cause of quarrels and assaults. It hardens a man's heart against the wife of his bosom, and the children of his affection. The poor wretch, who is the slave of this horrid vice, drinks his earnings at the public house, while his wife and children are starving at home. The companions he associates with are too often the very pests of society. *The Plunderer, the Poacher, the Vagabond, and the Thief are usually bred up in the school of drunkenness, nay more, the Adulterer and the Murderer.* Can we wonder then that the Bible expressly declares, that no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven? "*Know ye not* (says St. Paul) *that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor* DRUNKARDS, *shall inherit the kingdom of God.*" 1 Cor. vi. 10.

But Davis and Clarke traced back their ruin, not only to DRUNKENNESS AND BAD COMPANY, but also in a special manner to SABBATH BREAKING.

God, from the very beginning commanded, that one day out of the seven should be kept holy to himself, as the great creator and governor of the world. (Gen. ii.) Such was the first design of the Sabbath, but christians unite with it the memory of a still more wonderful event than creation, viz.: *the completion of man's redemption by the triumphant resurrection of our Lord and Saviour from the dead.* As this great event took place on the first day of the week, the christian sabbath was appointed by Apostolic authority to be held upon it, instead of the seventh day; and it is for

this reason that it is impressively called the LORD'S DAY; the day on which it is the duty of christians to unite in the most solemn and public manner "in confessing Christ before men," (vid. Luke xii. 8.) and by entering into communion with Him, their glorified Head, to gather strength for the duties, support for the trials, moderation amidst the successes, and watchfulness against the temptations of the ensuing week.

Gratitude and duty then equally enjoin us to keep this day holy. But we must be blind indeed if we do not see that our own happiness and self-interest no less forcibly recommend it. As mortals we are the creatures of a day. Our bodies will quickly moulder in the grave. Where will our immortal souls then be? The answer to this question will very much depend on the way in which we spend the LORD'S DAY. How little time have the labouring classes on other days to attend to their highest and best interests. How wise and right then, my friends, will it be in you to spend this day religiously and well. A well-spent Sunday will prove the happiest day in the week, and shed a blessing on all the remainder. The duties of public and private devotion need by no means engross all your time. You may spend many delightful hours in the bosom of your families, and enjoy in the company of christian friends a relaxation from the labours of the week; and each Sunday so spent, will leave you more fitted and prepared to unite at last with the "innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect," in the exalted services of the heavenly temple.

But if you waste these sacred opportunities in idleness and diversion, much more if you devote them to drunken revelry, or profligate pleasure, the frown of God will be upon you—you will become hardened in impiety; and it is impossible to say into what depths of sin and infamy you may finally sink in some moment of severe and unexpected temptation. *How little did Davis and Clarke think, while they went on year after year in just such a course as this, that they would at last have to testify, in the most solemn manner, that sabbath-breaking was one of the principal causes which brought them to the gallows.*

How incumbent is it on parents and heads of families, and all who have any influence or authority over others, to reflect on the double motive which should lead them to do honour to God and to the religious institutions of their country, by the devout observation of the Lord's day. The first motive is the obvious one of their own duty, self-interest, and happiness; the second, the solemn responsibility, as they will have to answer to God for it, of setting a good example to others in this important particular.

The truths touched upon in the preceding narrative should equally engage the attention and influence the conduct of all orders and degrees of men; and in proportion as they do, we shall exhibit the signs of an advancing or declining nation. They are eternal and unchanging truths; deeply founded in the nature of man, and in the relation in which he is placed to God by the christian covenant. Human laws may change, and human customs may vary, but under all circumstances and

conditions of society, SIN will conduct to misery, and TRUE RELIGION to happiness. Sin is the great disease of our fallen nature; it is the bitter fountain of all crime, and sorrow, and suffering. The end and aim of christianity is to destroy its power. Christ is the great conqueror of sin; he died to deliver us from its curse; he ever lives in heaven to sanctify his church and people. He is the Light and Life of the world, and if that world is ever truly reformed, it will be by coming into his school, and learning wisdom at his feet. Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but his Word shall not pass away.

THE END.

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